The David Wills House- Gallery Descriptions Gettysburg National Military Park

Opening February 12, 2009, as part of Gettysburg National Military Park, the David Wills House in downtown Gettysburg tells the story of a town recovering from the devastation of battle, and a war-worn President who came to dedicate a national cemetery. David Wills' home was the center of the immense clean-up process after the Battle of Gettysburg. In a second-floor bedroom, President Abraham Lincoln put the finishing touches on the Gettysburg Address - the speech transformed Gettysburg from a place of sorrow to the symbol of our nation's new birth of freedom.

The museum includes seven galleries, including the restored office where David Wills coordinated post-battle recovery efforts and invited a President to deliver "a few appropriate remarks," and the famous Lincoln bedroom where the President finished revising the Gettysburg Address.

Main Street Gettysburg will operate the museum in cooperation with the National Park Service.

Reception area

Visitors will enter the home through the York Street entrance, which was the original entrance to the building used by the Wills Family. The Reception area includes an information desk where visitors may learn more about visiting the Wills House, and other activities and tours in the town of Gettysburg. An **admission fee** is charged for entry into the museum however the Reception area is open without a fee. A small bookstore will offer books and other educational items for sale.

Exhibit Galleries

Gallery 1 – The Wills Parlor: War Comes To Town

This first museum gallery includes artifacts, photographs, and stories about Gettysburg: a Crossroads Town, about the founding of Gettysburg and what it was like before the battle. The gallery also describes the aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg and David Wills' involvement as the agent for town's recovery from an unprecedented tragedy.

A five minute film, "From Battle Ground to Hallowed Ground" tells the story of the transformation of Cemetery Hill from a Union army defensive position to the site of the national cemetery.

A map shows the ten roads leading into the growing town of Gettysburg. These are the roads that brought commerce, industry, and commodities into Gettysburg. In 1863 these roads filled with marching soldiers.

Exhibits on the aftermath of the battle highlight the hospitals, the morgue, and the supplies coming in. The Wills House itself was used to care for wounded. It was a depot for supplies for the U. S. Sanitary and Christian Commissions, and letters were delivered to Wills' office from people asking for help finding their sons lost in battle here.

A three dimensional diorama shows the 1863 neighborhood of the Wills House and how each building was used during the aftermath. Artifacts on exhibit will include items associated with the early life of David Wills, items documenting the battle in the town, and surgical instruments from the war.

Gallery 2 – Recreated Room: David Wills' Office, the Busiest Office in Gettysburg

This room recreates the office of attorney David Wills with writing desk, bookcase, and period furniture. When you enter David Will's office, you enter the center of Gettysburg's recovery efforts. Wills and others in the town were performing the work of today's FEMA, the American Red Cross, and the Center for Disease Control, combined.

An audio program in this gallery gives visitors a sense of being in the room as all of this was happening. Visitors will also be able to see original documents showing the efforts of David Wills in forming the national cemetery. When visitors leave they walk upstairs on the restored staircase.

Gallery 3 – Stairwell Foyer and Corridor: News of the Day

Pennsylvania's Governor Curtain designated David Wills as an agent for the state to help with the emergency. Wills invited the President to say a few appropriate remarks. He also invited Edward Everett, the main speaker. This gallery includes a montage of life before the war. Visitors can compare what the Gettysburg's two daily newspapers were writing about before the war began and these same newspapers' coverage of the battle, what some called "the Invasion of Pennsylvania."

The words of Gettysburg Address will be displayed here, including different versions of the speech and differing reactions to the speech. Visitors will also have a chance to see artifacts associated with the dedication ceremonies, including the saddle cover used by President Lincoln as he rode to then new national cemetery.

One panel shows that Everett and Lincoln said the same thing about the reason for the gathering on November 19, 1863. Everett made his point in a whopping 5566 words. Lincoln said his in only 38 words: "We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives, that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this."

Gallery 4 - The Lincoln Parlor

While the Wills family and the Town of Gettysburg prepare for the President's visit, Lincoln makes his own preparations for the long train trip to Gettysburg. Lincoln's concerns about his

sick son, his experiences as a war president, and his responsibility for the great sacrifices at Gettysburg all weighed heavily on his mind while he prepared to ask citizens to rededicate themselves to the struggles of the war and the "...great task remaining."

On the eve of the Address, the Wills house was overflowing with dinner guests--38 of them. David and his wife, Catherine, spent the evening welcoming and hosting the dignitaries – a busy night for Catherine, who was expecting her fourth child. Overnight guests filled every room including her very own bedroom, which is where Lincoln stayed. By the time Governor Curtain arrived at almost midnight the house was full.

Exhibits here also prepare visitors to stand in the room where Lincoln stayed and finished revising his remarks the night before he delivered them and explore how and why the Gettysburg Address is remembered to this day.

Gallery 5 – Recreated Room: Lincoln's Bedroom

An audio program at the entrance to the Lincoln bedroom is meant to take him from the status he occupies in minds of so many people today – half superhero and half saint – and humanize the man. As Lincoln is writing at a table visitors listen to his thoughts, learning about the things he was planning to say the next day as well as the other thoughts going through his mind, like the war up until this point, his sick son left at home, even the noisy crowd outside his window that wanted him to speak to them.

Displays identify the original bed and other furnishings used by Lincoln that will be on display in this room.

Gallery 6 – The Legacy of the Address

The gallery opens with a ten minute documentary film about the Gettysburg Address - "A brief but immortal speech." An interactive exhibit on myths of the Gettysburg Address lets visitors decide fact or fiction on statements like "Lincoln scribbled his address on the back of an envelope on the train to Gettysburg." Artifacts in this area will highlight the legacy of the Address.

Gallery 7 – The Wills House Through Time

The final exhibits in the museum focus on the preservation and restoration of the house and the Wills family legacy. Exhibits describe the preservation of the building, and its different uses through time including the building's use as a drug store. In 2004 the house became property of the American people, ensuring that people from all over the world can visit to learn about the story of David Wills and his house as the center of the town's recovery effort and Lincoln and his speech as a symbol of the nation's recovery.

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